

Testimony on Expedited Bill 41-21

Good Afternoon members of the Council,
It was truly an honor and a privilege to serve on the Montgomery County 2021 Redistricting Commission. Thank you for the opportunity.

I am testifying today to share with you some of my thoughts on the map that was recommended by the Redistricting Commission and is currently before the Council.

For those who may not be aware, the commission is made up of Republicans, Democrats, Independents and one libertarian. We hail from every region of the county and came together and worked for seven months drafting and creating a map that added two new councilmanic districts. This was not an easy task. We had some ground rules laid out before us in creating this map that included:

- Equal protection
- Compactness
- Contiguity
- Minority representation
- Preservation of communities of interest
- And we had to ensure that there was no “packing” of populations into one single district or “splitting” which could potentially split populations in a manner that dilute their impact on elections.

The map before you is historic in nature. It creates a district in the East County with a plurality of African Americans and creates another district in the Wheaton area with a plurality of Latinos. Six of the seven districts are a majority people of color which is alignment with the census data that we received indicating the dramatic shifts in population in Montgomery County and the state of Maryland. Maryland is now the fourth most diverse state in the country.

This is who we are!

In your deliberations, please consider that this map is in fact a map that will finally create full representation for all residents of the county. We should not back away from what that means. We were able to confront and eliminate systemic barriers on marginalized communities in terms of their ability to fully participate in the political and electoral process and that is a big deal.

And finally, residents in the county will find that by adding two new councilmanic districts along with the four at-large council seats, will create more representation for all residents countywide. Nothing has been diminished. We have grown the ability for a representative democracy to thrive in Montgomery County.

Valerie Ervin